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An Improbable Case of Philosophy: Arne Naess between Empiricism, Existentialism and Metaphysics.[1]

The Selected Works of Arne Naess, ed. by Harold Glasser and Alan Drengson in cooperation with the author, Dordrecht: Springer 2005. 10 volumes.

On January 12, 2009 Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess passed away at the age of 96. He was still actively involved in putting together the edition of the Selected Writings of Arne Naess (SWAN). He worte an introduction to the writings which is printed at the beginning of each volume together with the extensive introduction by the editor Harold Glasser. At first sight this seems strangely repetitive and superfluous but on closer scrutiny it certainly makes sense. In view of the large breadth of philosophical themes that are presented in the volumes it is quite likely that the readers interested in the writings will come from different areas. A number of these writings make high demands on the reader who is expected to be relatively versed in logical analysis and in the work and thought of Spinoza, Kierkegaard, Gandhi, Husserl, Carnap or even Sextus Empiricus. The reader who is interested in one of these heterogenous fields is encouraged by both introductory texts to reflect on a specific theme against the backdrop of the philosophers's entire oeuvre – and that's a good thing.

In the present review I will trace several lines leading through Naess' work which reflect the continuity of and differences to logical empiricism – on the basis of writings that have appeared in volumes I and VIII. In the following Thomas Seiler will review volume X which brings together Arne Naess' writings on "ecosophy". First, I will briefly describe the SWAN. The selection made by the editors gives the reader an impression of the diversity of philosophical themes that Naess was interested in: communication theory, empirical semantics and behaviorist epistemology (vols. I, VII, VIII), scepticism, scientific and cultural pluralism (vols. II, III, IV, IX), normative systems theory and the idea of what Naess called „total views" (vols. III, IV). There is an important amount of Gandhi und Spinoza scholarship (vols. V, VI), and last but not least ecology (vol. X).

The editors decided not to include writings that are relatively well known and still available. This refers primarily to writings on ecology. Naess coined the terms "deep ecology" and "shallow ecology" and made them the focus of his environmentalist ethics. Since the 1970s he was a prominent activist of the ecology move-

1 Thanks to Camilla Nielsen for translating parts of the text and revising the English of the whole essay.

ment. His thoughts and writings are widely read in the community of ecologists. In this edition the writings on ecological themes are thus limited to volume X. The collection does not include a number of writings that would be interesting from the perspective of 20th century history of philosophy – most notably Naess' dissertation "Knowledge and Scientific Behavior", completed in 1936 and submitted to the University of Oslo. This work is informed by the critical exploration of the ideas of logical empiricism. Naess had become familiar with these ideas during his sojourn in Vienna (1934 to 1935) when he attended the discussions at the Schlick Circle.

In volume VIII we find an article (published for the first time in 1993) in which Naess reports on his experiences at the Schlick seminar: "Logical Empiricism and the Uniqueness of the Schlick Seminar: A Personal Experience With Consequences." In this text Naess underlines how deeply influenced he was by the group (SWAN VII, 261). Naess saw his life-long interest in communication theory and the great attention he gave to the broad spectrum of logically possible linguistic "formulations" (SWAN VIII, 263, 280) as the direct legacy of the Vienna Circle. In addition to touching personal reminiscences the text also includes several central points on which Naess criticized logical empiricism - in particular the metaphyics-criticism in Carnap's famous Heidegger critique which Naess saw as being too restrictive (SWAN VIII, 268.) He appealed for taking philosophical texts seriously also when they are written in strange language. Moreover his reflections on the interpretation of philosophical texts also had certain commonalities with the those that Richard von Mises expressed in his *Kleines Lehrbuch des Positivismus* (published for the first time in 1939). But let's hear what Naess himself said:

> When I interpret a philosophical text, my point of view is that of a lawyer interpreting a will. Grammatical failures, strange uses of words, misspellings do not count when one tries to find out exactly what the author of the will wanted to convey in his will. If he calls his wine cellar the library, that is okay, if it can be established that this was the habitual way of talking in his family. Similarly, if a philosopher has strange ways of expressing certain opinions, one of the tasks of the historian is to try out re-formulations better suited to present his or her opinions. On the other hand, we may look upon the text as a musical or mathematical score and see which interpretation might be most interesting given certain purposes. The later texts of Heidegger, for example, have been freely interpreted by some environmentalists and found very useful. The logical empiricists, however, were too attracted to the exploration of one definite model of language, namely calculi with sets of formation and transformation rules, to be interested in the more empirical investigations of philosophical texts as presenting ordinary ways of talking. The ordinary ways are full of metaphors, pictures, unscientific phrases – as are those of philosophers through the ages. (SWAN VIII, p. 268)

This paragraph aptly expresses the tension that can be found throughout Naess' philosophical thought. Against Carnap's "calculus model of language" Naess ad-

vocated interpreting philosophical texts either hermeneutically with a view to the author's intention or making them the object of empirical study of language. As we know, each of these two approaches to the study of language was represented and developed by a large number of philosophers and linguists in the 20th century. There are, however, few philosophers who would grant both the hermeneutic and the radically empirical approach to philosophical issues the same legitimation. It is precisely here that the originality of Naess' philosophical approach lies. And it is also here that its provocation lies. It looks as if Naess wanted overtake the logical empiricists both the left and the right at the same time. He did not shirk from associating philosophies defined in strictly anti-naturalistic terms such as Heidegger's with a strictly naturalistic theory of meaning of truth. What was to be the outcome of this? – SWAN does not necessarily offer an answer to this question but it does provide highly interesting material on how Naess viewed this question and how he worked on coming up with an answer.

Volume I includes one of Naess' writings that can be ascribed to analytical philosophy and that documents the radically naturalistic side of this thought: "Interpretation and Preciseness. A Contribution to the Theory of Communication" (1953). Here questions are addressed that have interested the logical empiricists from the beginning. They have to do with the relation between uninterpreted linguistic basic terms and complex terms with which the language of science and everyday language work. Naess, however, points out right at the beginning of the book that his goal is "similar to, but slightly different from, the aim of various contemporary studies in logical analysis, theory of communication, conceptual analysis, and so forth." (SWAN I, 1) His goal was not

> to solve problems that philosophers down the ages have not succeeded in solving. What I have tried to do is to open up certain channels of research of a rather basic, but trivial kind. The research I have in mind can be varied out only step-by-step as a cooperative enterprise. [….] The immediate aim of this work is to contribute to the foundation of semantics and the theory of communication as an empirical science. (SWAN I, 1)

The theory of communication outlined in the book is based on the relation between what Naess called "intrapersonal synonymity" and "interpersonal synonymity". He developed several types of questionnaire procedures that can be used to turn "assertions about intrapersonal synonymity" into an "object of research rather than ingredients in intelligent conversation." (SWAN I, 1) In the next step he analyzed the structure of "interpersonal synonymity" which is closely related to communication procedures like agreement and pseudoagreement, interpretation and misinterpretation, description and normative definition. Although an important part of the study addresses the logical relations between sentences, the subject matter of the book is not purely logical.

This work concentrates on cognitive aspects of verbal communication – for example, the attempt to convey information – but spoken and written expressions are not abstracted from the context of individuals' speaking, writing, listening to, and reading those expressions, as is legitimately done in pure logical analysis. The basic materials for us are occurrences of utterances." (SWAN I, 2)

Naess hoped that this type of investigation would

be of help to philosophers with an analytical and an empirical bent […] and to those who are carrying out comprehensive studies of certain terms or phrases as they occur in politics, religion, and ethical or other kinds of indoctrination; or of terms in some of the sciences including history, theory of law, and other branches of humanities. (SWAN I, 3)

However, many philosophers would not be happy with the specific way that Naess combined logical analysis and social research. His studies on the concept of truth and other problems of semantics are the best-known examples of this type of logico-social research. Some of them have been published as the first part ("Empirical semantics") of Volume VIII of SWAN. The crucial point made in those writings is still inspiring and provocative. Naess wanted not only to analyze the "utterances" of individuals in certain communication contexts, but also to know more about what he called the "common-sense theories" on semantics held by these individuals. Naess thus asked "people who are not (supposed to be) philosophers" (SWAN VIII, p. 3) about their theories concerning the notions of truth and logical equivalence, and about their understanding of the logical term "or". One should not underestimate what Naess tried to do in these studies – he was not as naïve as some philosophers might be inclined to think.[2] He worked with highly sophisticated questionnaires, creating conditions in which semantically relevant questions would arise. Here are only a few examples of such questions concerning truth: Is there anything absolutely true? What is the common characteristic of that which is true? What is the common property of a true statement? (SWAN VIII, p. 9) In order to know more about the common understanding of the term "or", Naess asked questions such as the following. Peter made a bet that Volga is in Russia or in Romania. It is in Russia as well as in Romania. Did Peter win the bet? Can one infer that Jack is married to Joan if one knows that he is not married to Phyllis and that he is married to Joan or Phyllis? (SWAN VIII, p. 34)

Note that Naess did not claim that this type of social research could determine the meaning of truth, logical equivalence, logical inference, etc. He had a different aim. He wanted to know to what extent the ideas non-philosophers hold on philosophical issues differ from the ideas of professional philosophers. He also wanted to find out how the philosophical ideas of the respondents can be related to their

2 However, today's "Experimental Philosophy" seems to have a similar agenda. Thanks to C. Limbeck-Lilienau for calling our attention to J. Knobe, S. Nichols (eds.): *Experimental Philosophy*, Oxford 2008. See also F. Stadler in this volume.

social background, to different levels of education, etc. His research on the question produced the following results. First, there is no such thing as the one truth theory that is characteristic of common ordinary thought. Second, many of the truth theories developed by philosophers over the centuries have reappeared in the "common sense theories" of truth. Third, even people who have had no training in philosophy whatsoever articulate arguments similar to those classical philosophers have put forward. Fourth, the views held by philosophically trained respondents do not differ significantly from views of respondents without any philosophical training. From this it seems to be clear that Naess' "empirical semantics" does not make any philosophical claim on meaning and truth. Instead, it purports to produce empirical knowledge about common sense theories which philosophers are used to speculating about. Naess believed that such knowledge could be of great use to philosophers. Since many of them refer systematically – albeit in a critical way – to philosophical views allegedly held by most people, any misconception of those views may have a negative effect on the philosophical theories. Seen from this angle, Naess' empirical semantics aimed at creating new conditions of communication between philosophers and so-called non-philosophers.

Interestingly enough, it was in a similar spirit that already in the 1930s Naess criticized the logical empiricist program. His paper "How can the empirical movement be promoted today? A discussion of the empiricism of Otto Neurath and Rudolf Carnap" was written in German between 1937 and 1939. The English translation of the text and the commentaries which Naess in 1956 added to it (published for the first time in 1992) are included in SWAN VIII. This highly interesting paper shows how close many of Naess' ideas were to Neurath's. Naess argued for understanding Logical Empiricism to be not a set of theories but rather a set of proposals for bringing communication between different disciplines and theoretical approaches about. Naess thought that it was futile to search for definitively clear-cut demarcation criteria between empirical and non-empirical sentences. He thus warned against overstraining the "physicalist thesis" which claims that every term of the language of science is reducible to the terms of physical language. (SWAN VIII, 171) He pleaded for interpreting physicalism as an ongoing project which aims at formulating questions in an empirical way and making them sufficiently precise. Naess found it more desirable "to produce recommendations for expository and discussion practice" than to defend far-reaching theoretical theses about science in general. "One should not lose sight of the fact that the physicalist speaks of Science as a whole, and hence makes statements that I as an empiricist want to treat with the greatest caution." (SWAN VIII, 180)

Naess was aware that his conception of empiricism was very close to Neurath's. Yet as the present collection of writings shows, this affinity was surprisingly far-reaching. Some of the formulations in Naess' 1937–39 paper articulate almost exactly the same considerations Neurath brought forward in his paper "The Lost Wanderers of Cartesius". Remember a few of Neurath's sentences in 1913:

It was a fundamental error of Descartes that he believed that only in the practical field could he not dispense with provisional rules. Thinking, too, needs preliminary rules in more than one respect. The limited span of life already urges us ahead. … Whoever wants to create a world-view or a scientific system must operate with doubtful premises. ... The phenomena that we encounter are so much interconnected that they cannot be described by a one-dimensional chain of statements. The correctness of each statement is related to that of all others. … In order to make progress one very often finds oneself in the position of having to choose one of several hypotheses of equal probability … (Neurath [1913] 1983, p. 3)

Here is what Naess wrote in 1937–39:

I personally think that it is compatible with the empirical attitude to devote all one's energy to a certain research program, that is, in a certain direction. Absolutism in the choice of problems is caused by the fact that there are limits to what an individual can accomplish in science. This does not necessitate a categorical formulation of the results one hopes the program will yield. Absolutism of action in no way implies an absolutism of hypotheses. (SWAN VIII, p. 188)

And in 1956 Naess added the following to the last sentence:

When research is understood as a type of human activity, this sentence can be restated as follows: "Absolutism of action does not justify absolutism concerning hypotheses."
The investigator continually has to act on the basis of priority lists resting on conclusions drawn from dubious *pro-and-contra* deliberations. The time and the energy he has at his disposal are limited; the field of research is infinite in all directions. If he wants to obtain results, he will have to concentrate on definite tasks. This often requires a certain amount of painful resignation, which may lead him to overestimate the area he has chosen and the significance of his results. However, the fact that a certain investigator has made an absolute (final, unconditional) choice does not justify utterances about his choice being the only adequate one in the research situation in question. (SWAN VIII, 210)

It is interesting in itself that Neurath articulated in a very similar way the project "to understand research as a type of human activity". In addition to this, Naess' approach to science might be of some help in discovering some features of Neurath's concept of science which usually go unnoticed. Neurath's philosophical ideas on science are generally viewed as an early pragmatist version of Logical Empiricism. There is no doubt a lot of pragmatism in Neurath and, to a certain degree, even in Naess who was an admirer of William James. But Naess' philosophical works also allow us to look at Neurath from a different angle. It was not only pragmatists but also existentialists who emphasized that any human activity, including cognition, takes place in a situation in which we lack an overall picture and have to make "absolute (final, unconditional) choices". Existentialists, too, stressed that we cannot justify our decisions by referring them to unshakable principles. Naess explicitly pointed out that what he called "absolutism of action" had a strong existentialist background.

> Then you … feel like Kierkegaard, where you are always deep in the water – sixty thousand fathoms, in the sense that a decision *must* be made. That is existentialism at its best. No more talk now, you go left or right. And then you have a proclamation ending with an exclamation mark. You must act! You can't get away from it. That is Kierkegaard at his best. I have been very much influenced by Kierkegaard. …
> You are caught as a human being. In a certain sense it is dreadful, especially for people who are morally extremely serious – they cannot accept that you go right instead of left without a complete justification. You jump right, and there is a risk that it was completely wrong of you … That they cannot stand. They must have a complete reason and stick to that. (Naess 1993, 123)

Remember that Neurath's anti-foundationalism, too, was not restricted to philosophy of science. When he articulated for the first time, in 1913, his conception of science as a provisional human enterprise, he presented it primarily as a response to the cultural, social and moral challenges of his time. He criticized what he called "pseudo-rationalism" primarily for its destructive effects in the moral, social and political domain. Yet however close their anti-foundationalist views might have been, Naess' commitment to existentialism went much further than the allusions to it we can trace in Neurath. In his book *Four Great Philosophers* (Chicago 1968) Naess put Heidegger and Sartre side by side with Carnap and Wittgenstein, a gesture which Neurath would hardly have accepted. The book (regrettably not included in SWAN) is an impressive example of Naess' thoughtful and attentive way of interpreting philosophical texts of very different style.

Though we decided to restrict this review to some of the subjects in Naess' philosophy which are related to Logical Empiricism, we want to emphasize that it is exactly the connection between logico-analytical methods, radical empiricism and a deep-rooted interest in metaphysics which makes Naess' philosophy unique, fascinating, and – considering all its tensions – disturbing, too. He was deeply interested in the philosophical analysis of norms. He believed that investigating the basic norms of human behaviour is as much a logical enterprise as it is an empirical and a metaphysical one. In respect to his view of metaphysics, the studies of Spinoza are particularly rich. Some of them are published in vol. VI. But even volume VIII which puts together much of the writings related to Logical Empiricism, contains a part dedicated to "Metaphysics, Morals, and Gestalt Ontology". It includes writings on the cognitive status of norms and Gestalt Thinking. There is also a small article on "Kierkegaard and the Values of Education" from 1968. From our point of view, this is a particularly precious piece of writing, for it shows both, the continuity of Naess' thinking with some of the crucial aims of Logical Empiricism, and the new direction his philosophical thought took later on. Besides that, the article gives another example of Naess' sensitive, highly original and inspiring way to interpret philosophical texts. In this case, he looked closely at Kierkegaard's "Concluding Unscientific Postscript". For Naess the "delightful anti-Hegelian sayings of Johannes Climacus" are still a valuable criticism of any "nationalist, theological, historical 'scientific' dogmas and myths" (SWAN VIII,

344). Johannes Climacus' refusal of all system-building lead Naess to considerations very close to Neurath's, on the one hand, and to some critical reflections on the higher education system of his days, on the other. His plead for encouraging the individual development of students is not less important today than it was in the 1960ies.

> The system-building most dangerous to the inner, individual sources of belief, including valuation, is today the interpretations provided by popularizers of science and by "experts" in administration. We need a neo-Duhemian stress on the difference between more or less certain and indubitable results of scientific or technical research, on the one hand, and interpretations and interpolations, on the other. The latter can exhibit vast differences in direction, but owing to ideological and other idiosyncrasies of teachers and parents, the young are stuffed with one interpretation, to the accompaniment of a negative inducement to allow their imaginations to play with other possibilities. Consequently, the very sources of creative personal belief are apt to dry up, with resulting loss of individuality and interest in spiritual matters. The vast textbook systematizations foster the illusion of a pre-existing world common to all individuals in which they all live, one that is known in all important respects. We need to stress a plurality of world views, of historical interpretations, of views on human existence. (SWAN VIII, 344)

For sure, neither Neurath nor any other early Logical Empiricist commented on individual belief or spiritual matters in the way Naess did. They would probably have been rather suspicious of the existentialist notion of "deep choices" and of Naess' view that what counts "is the seriousness, pathos, energy, genuineness, enthusiasm, and depth of choice. A choice may be taken as deeper the more it touches the system of attitudes as a whole, that is, the more fundamental it is." (VIII, 345) Logical Empiricists would have been even more irritated with the idea of "being in the truth" which Naess took from Kierkegaard: "The deeper choices have a purely personal relation, an individual component: is the chooser in the truth?" (ibid.)

Yet his reflections deserve some more close reading. If we read Naess in the unbiased and attentive way that he read other philosophers, we might find an empiricist and naturalist as radical as Neurath, who, at the same time, did not limit himself to the third-person perspective which is so characteristic of the Neurathian approach. Seen from this angle, Naess rather followed Schlick's emphasis on subjective experience (which Schlick articulated – against Neurath – in the protocol sentence debate), but elaborated the subjective side of experience in a different way. Naess took up the radically individual perspective on one's own life articulated by existentialists and tried to make it compatible with uncompromising empiricism and naturalism. To articulate this improbable project, he used philosophical elements of such different nature as Phyrronian Scepticism, traditional Chinese and Indian philosophy, the teaching of Gandhi, phenomenology, Gestalt-psychology and – perhaps most importantly – Spinoza's metaphysics. This sounds very eclectic, and to a certain degree it is. But reading Naess on so highly different

subjects and authors is a fascinating experience in itself. One never gets the feeling of arbitrariness but rather of a particular type of development. In his comments on what higher education is all about, Naess explicated that there is no intellectual and personal development without discontinuity, created by choices.

> Every deep choice creates a discontinuity; the individual develops into something different from what he was before, and something more self-made, autonomous. Only through such choices can the youngster develop into a strong personality. Only if he is able to 'go into himself', concentrate and listen to more or less immature impulses, and have the courage to follow them, only then can the growth of the personality withstand the external pressures of parents and teachers trying directly to influence choice. (SWAN VIII, 345)

For Naess, there was no contrast or tension between "creative personal belief" and "inwardness", on the one hand, and the scientific attitude, on the other. On the contrary. He conceived of research as an excellent example of human activity in which personal development towards more autonomy can and should take place.

> The authority of Kierkegaard is sometimes used to belittle scientific research and objectivity. Seen another way, however, the researcher tries to be intellectually honest and open-minded in his choices, and the dedicated researcher requires his own kind of endurance and faithfulness as he proceeds (like the historians of the Bible) along the infinite "road of approximations". Research, therefore, is one of the professions admirably adapted to test inwardness and ethical stamina. (SWAN VIII, 346)

It is not only for the richness and thoughtfulness of Naess' writings that the SWAN edition deserves much more attention than Naess' philosophy receives nowadays. The ten volumes can also be read as a testimony of a philosophical journey which was motivated and shaped by two orientations that we have become used to thinking of as incompatible: the pluralism of world-views and the search for objectivity and truth. Remarkably enough, Naess saw himself as an uncompromising pluralist as well as a uncompromising searcher for truth. No wonder that such a project leaves more questions open than it can answer. However, open questions do not prove that the project was futile. Questions are open to further investigation. The new edition has created very good conditions for this pursuit.

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Review of Arne Naess, *Deep Ecology of Wisdom.* 687 p. (SWAN, vol. X)

The recently published survey volume "Deep Ecology of Wisdom. Explorations in Unities of Nature and Cultures. Selected Papers" is the 10th volume in the series "The Selected Works of Arne Naess". This volume was edited by Harold Glasser together with the author and the well-known theorists of the Deep Ecology movement Alan Drengson, Bill Devall and George Sessions. A number of important essays, to date unpublished or published a long time ago in for the most part difficult to access journals or books, are united here for the first time in one volume.

Of the introductory articles of the editors I would like to refer in particular to Harold Glasser's remarks (especially pages xl-xlv). Ever since his article "On Warwick Fox's Assessment of Deep Ecology" was published, he is seen as the leading expert on Arne Naess's work (see: Journal Environmental Ethics, 1997, online: www.umweltethik.at).

Most of the 57 articles contained in the 9 chapters of the volume were written in 1973 to 2000. Altogether, the volume has 600 pages including introductory articles, footnotes, an extensive bibliography of Naess' work as well as a keynote index. This is the most comprehensive collection of articles on Arne Naess and Deep Ecology. Indeed it is a treasure trove for the philosopher and the environmentalist alike. The collection is an ideal complement to the monograph with the title "Ecology, Community and Lifestyle" (1889) which was not taken into account in the "Selected Works of Arne Naess".

The eco-philosophical aspects of Deep Ecology are addressed in section I (The Long-Range Deep Ecology Movement; 12 contributions) and to a certain degree in section VIII (Theoretical Dimensions of Deep Ecology and Ecosophy T; altogether 9 contributions).

Accounts of the Deep Ecology movement can be found in sections II (Values, Lifestyle and Sustainability; 7 essays), III (Deep Ecology and Politics; 3 texts), IV (Deep Ecology Practices: Integrating Cultural and Biological Diversity; 10 texts) and IX (Deep Ecology and the Future; 4 texts).

The following sections are dedicated to Arne Naess' own 'Ecosophy': section V (The Significance of Place: At Home in the Mountains; 4 texts), VI (Spinoza and Gandhi as and also parts of section VIII (Theoretical Dimensions of Deep Ecology and Ecosophy T; a total of 9 texts).

In "Nature Ebbing Out", published in 1965, the main theme of Deep Ecology already emerges: "The spectacular, free, beautiful and 'dangerous' nature is about to disappear. Our children will live in a domesticated world …" The disappearance of a 'free' or wild nature entails a reflection on man's relation to nature. The analysis of the growingly inconsiderate approach of man to nature takes place primarily in epistemological and ontological 'problematizations'. Which value structures, which understanding of the world, which self-understanding contributes to the part of nature that has been transformed by human intervention at a speed that makes the 'end of (wild) nature' seem almost inevitable in a couple of decades? While socio-economic structures in the broadest sense, as for instance population size, techniques, economic modes, power structures are addressed, and actually play an important role in the deep ecology platform – they are not analyzed in-depth.

The concepts that are central for Deep Ecology are addressed in almost all articles. These mainly include: a) the distinction in a far-reaching remodeling of man's relation to nature as opposed to a superficial environmental protection reform movement (Deep vs. Shallow Ecology); b) the thematic convergences of a 'radical' environmental protection movement with the goal of an ecologically sustainable approach to nature (Deep Ecology Platform); c) an 'ecologically' inspired value structure (ecosophy); d) the instrinsic value vs. instrumental value of nature ('right' to life and the right of all forms of life to thrive); e) identification with non-human nature (identification); f) a hierarchical-deductive system on four levels so as to move from basic values to norms of action (apriori) on four levels (apriori); g) an unbiased as possible clarification of basic valuative ideas and value priorities (Deep Questioning). In certain passages one would, however, have wished that the account was more systematic, comprehensive and more in-depth. Naess describes the philosophical underpinnings of his own ecosophy with the difficult concepts of Gestalt-ontology and Gestalt-experience. The former relates to the claim that reality does not consist of separate but of a network of related elements that in part constitute the others, while the latter refers to the distinction between the 'concrete contents' of reality and its 'abstract structures' and to the fact that in spontaneous experience there is no split in 'facts' and 'value' experiences. The central claim for Naess, namely that an identification with nature entails a transformed understanding of self and nature (self-realization) is also allotted ample space by the editors.

The reader, however, who is less interested in natural philosophical positions and more interested in intuitions and reflections related to ecology and the 'practice' of environmental protection will be satisfied. Arne Naess knows exactly how to convey his intuitions on the basis of own experiences with nature. These

descriptions offer consolation to all environmentalists who occasionally lose heart.

The ‘simple’ or ‘nature-oriented’ life is recommended to the reader not with false romanticism or normative gesture but as an option on the search for the meaning of life, life quality and rewarding experiences. In the article “An Example of Place: Tvergastein”, we witness Naess as a ‘naturalist’ in the sense of wilderness explorer of nature who stands out for his receptivity, attention, consideration, identification with his ‘object of study’ and devotion to even the smallest detail. Naess feels part of nature and neither inferior nor superior to it, and he respects the ‘right to life and thriving’. In the vicinity of his ‘Tvergastein’ hut, located at 1,500 meters above sea level, he spent a total of ten years, pursuing botanical, zoological, mineralogical, meteorological and other scientific studies. His approach is remarkable: “The meaningfulness inherent in even the tiniest living beings makes the amateur naturalist quiver with emotion. There is communication: the ‘things’ express, talk, proclaim – without words. Within a few yards from the gnarled wooden walls of the cottage Tvergastein there are rich and diverse changing worlds big enough to be entirely unsurveyable.”

This anthology is warmly recommended to anyone who seeks answers to basic questions, how we can relate as responsible members of larger – ‘more than human’ – world.

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